After the regimen of Asylum life and its banal brutality and boredom, what most preoccupies these patients is how they got there in the first place. This kind of writing becomes a distinct genre or sub-genre in the Case Files of the Queen Street Asylum. Usually it is a narrative of deception and betrayal, the decisive climax of a life story, the remainder of which is distorted -- truncated or abbreviated altogether. Many re-admissions later, the first committal is obsessively retold with surprising clarity of detail -- and also probably with subtle changes reflecting the death of a relative who had formerly played a role in the patient's confinement, a new doctor, or simply the passage of time.

Miss Adams's losses extend from the loss of possessions, as Miss Adams puts it, to bodily security. They amount to the loss of a life, something worse than being, as she describes her condition in the Asylum, buried alive. They are progressively depicted as due -- all the more terribly, perhaps -- to a parental "mistake," bureaucratic blundering, and gross human oversight. She initially feels outrage at being abandoned by a father with ample means to have rescued her: "it certainly would have been better if he had buried me instead of placing me amongst such degrading surroundings when he has possessions enough to keep me at home."

After attacking the nurses (in her June 10 letter) as "common uneducated women" unfit to "attend to ladies of refinement" she partially excuses her boastfulness as the natural reaction of one who should never have been committed in the first place. After his death her father appears less ambiguously as she claims that against his will she has been "forced into a Mad House without any certified Insanity paper signed by any reliable Doctor." Only god is competent to judge "where the Almighty afflicts" while his (the doctor's) "care and anxiety" for patients are, she adds sarcastically, "really touching." She understandably anticipates that "this letter will probably land me head over ears in warm water." Toward the end of the decade Miss Adams has developed a role for herself as a wealthy and refined heiress victimized by wicked nurses. In writing to Dr. Forster in 1917 to obtain permission to take music lessons, she expresses her dissatisfaction with the Asylum, and her determination to leave it.

She asks Dr. Forster on September 17, 1917 that her "Certificate of Sanity" be sent to Miss Watson at Hillcrest Convalescent Home. She repeats her